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‘The supremacy of ignorance over instruction and of numbers over knowledge’: Journalism, popular culture, and the English constitution

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Popular culture: subject or object?

Popular culture, understood as modern, industrialised, urban ‘associated life’ (Veblen 1899) and media, is both ‘object’ and ‘subject’ of representation in journalism. As object, popular culture is the familiar consumer market, over which the press barons and their international corporate successors preside. Here, professionals and proprietors take it upon themselves not only to sell representations of the world in commodity form to ‘the people,’ but also to set themselves up as representatives of their readership (using that term to cover all forms of semiotic engagement) whose abilities to choose and act (e.g. buy, vote, riot) they arrogate to themselves as part of their power to influence economic and political decisions.

But as subject, popular culture is the source and means of self-representation by various self-constituted versions of ‘the people.’ It is the place where individually and collectively, as persons or as classes, ‘ordinary’ people get to speak for themselves. Clearly journalism takes a different form, depending on whether popular culture is understood as object (‘they’), or subject (‘we’), in the process of production (Sonwalkar 2005).

In this paper I argue that this divergence, which emerged historically during the early part of the nineteenth century in Britain, accounts not only for different practices of journalism itself, depending on whether the individual or enterprise works from an ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ position with respect to popular culture, but also for differences in the study of journalism – specifically, the differences between journalism studies and cultural studies. Much of the paper is taken up with an account of the history, to show that while popular culture is its source, it was incorporated into the mechanisms of modern government for a very different purpose, in which its polarity was reversed, as it were – it turned from ‘subjective’ to ‘objective.’ But first, a few lines on why this history ought to matter not only to those who study journalism but also to those who are concerned about the future of newspapers.

Journalism studies is interested in journalism; *cultural studies* is interested in culture, as you would expect. Each field has properly concentrated on its own object of study, investigating with its own evolving set of methods and problems, to such an extent that the two specialisms now present to the observer as two different species. If they ever were varieties of the same discipline, it seems that at last they have speciated;

intermarriage among their populations is impossible. In this divergent evolution, journalism studies has tended to take the view that popular culture is an *object* (of manipulation; behaviour), while cultural studies has tended to view popular culture as a *subject* (of emancipation; action). Journalism research tends to prioritise the perspective of the *producer* (the professional, the industry, the firm); cultural studies that of the *consumer* (identity, meaning, use).

It seems that fear of miscegenation among journalism educators means that neither cultural studies nor popular culture are welcome in J-school environments; i.e. in the context of the professional training of newsroom journalists. From that perspective, studying popular culture is seen either as siding with a depoliticised celebration of consumerism, or as giving way to theory-driven relativism (Windschuttle 1998; *MIA* 1999). But such a view of popular culture and of cultural studies is mistaken, both historically and conceptually. Journalism studies would benefit from recognising more directly that the historical co-evolution of journalism and popular culture, the ‘subjective’ tradition of self-representation, and the methodological purposes of cultural studies, are all important to a proper understanding of journalism’s place in contemporary culture. In short, the *object of study* has not speciated, so the *means of study* ought not to either. Journalism and popular culture are part of the same unified field. To adopt an ‘objective’ or a ‘subjective’ stance is not a matter of discipline but of politics (or ‘interest’ at least). And while it might seem obvious that an ‘objective’ stance is preferable for journalism, the history of how popular culture was turned into an object suggests that this is by no means a reliable conclusion. Rather, popular culture as subject is the source of popular self-representation, a practice that was decisive in the evolution of mass communication, and which is now resurgent. With the current emergence of digital online self-made media, the need for an integrated understanding of journalism and popular culture is once again urgent, and cultural studies can assist in reaching it. Journalism studies would therefore benefit from giving consideration to the ‘subjective’ as well as to the ‘objective’ traditions; for example to YouTube as well as to ‘newspapers of record,’ because they are part of the same system, and any research field that focuses on just one of them is the poorer for it.

Liberty and libertinage

> *We are forced to ask ourselves how inflammatory language and mythologizing can offer a legitimate exegesis on the politics of the day.*
> (Antoine de Baecque, 1989: 168)

Popular culture is the true seed-bed of modern popular journalism. Although newspapers for the gentry and merchant classes had been around since the seventeenth century, it was only when they became popular that they took on contemporary shape, and only then that journalism achieved its potential of communicating with entire populations regardless of their local class or status. In turn, journalism played a strong role in developing popular culture as a modern, urban, mediated experience, as opposed to the prevailing notion of it at the time as craft-based folk art.

Popular journalism was born of the European Enlightenment, French Revolution, and British industrialisation and urbanisation during the period from the 1790s to the 1840s. In that half-century, motivated by a desire for political emancipation as well as an entrepreneurial bid for profit, radical journalists and publishers, from Tom Paine and William Cobbett to Richard Carlile and Henry Hetherington (see Spartacus n.d.), perfected the means for secular, cross-demographic communication about public (and private) affairs to 'ordinary' readers numbering in the hundreds of thousands and – by the time the ultra-radical Sunday newspaper *News of the World* came onto the scene in 1843 – millions. This was, as historian Robert K. Webb put it, 'a pioneering effort to solve the problem of getting ideas across from one man, or one class, to another' (Webb 1955: 35; and see Hartley 1996: 94-9). The 'pauper press' succeeded in creating the popular 'reading public'; an achievement won by people without the vote, often poor, in the teeth of government suppressions, and with no established business infrastructure or market.

‘Getting ideas across’ was not a merely cerebral business, however. Modern political journalism was founded as much in scandal, gossip and sensationalism as it was in reason and truth. As the *ancien régime* slid towards political modernisation via the French Revolution, salacious novels and pornographic pamphlets were the ‘real sources from which political journalism originated in France,’ according to the historian Robert Darnton (1982: 203). Sex and politics were coterminous; as the bedroom antics of *Therese philosophe* (Anon. 1748) and her many successors demonstrated by the simple device of equating the achievement of orgasm with that of freedom. Sexual gossip, scandal and innuendo about the king, queen, courtiers and clerics were used to undermine deference towards royalty and aristocracy, while stories of sexual awakening and libertinage were grand metaphors for political self-realisation and philosophical freedom. The most celebrated writers of the Enlightenment – Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Mirabeau – wrote bawdy and pornographic works as well as political journalism and philosophy, without making a distinction between the personal (popular culture) and the political (journalism). On the contrary, the genre of publishing that gave birth to popular journalism in France, the ‘*livres philosophiques*,’ lumped porn together with philosophy (Darnton & Roche 1989: 27-49). In short, and not only in France (see McCalman 1992; 1993), the radical underground was not squeamish about where journalism stopped and other forms of writing and representation began. ‘Liberty’ and ‘libertinage’ shared the same philosophical history (Grayling 2005: 116-8).

Representation – two models for ‘two nations’

> *It was not easy to escape from politics in nineteenth-century Britain. It filled the newspapers; it was a principal means of mass entertainment.* (Webb 1955: 83).

During the early nineteenth century, when industrialisation took hold, first of all in Britain, only three men in a hundred and no women had the vote. There was a sharp divide between the working class and the political class: they were, in Disraeli’s famous phrase, ‘two nations’ (Disraeli 1845: p. 149). The propertied, educated and enfranchised class, both conservative and liberal (as Gilbert and Sullivan famously satirized in *Iolanthe*), followed public affairs in papers such as *The Times* and *The Economist*. These were dedicated to politics (confidence or otherwise in the government of the day), public administration (e.g. campaigns for army reform, or against slavery or capital punishment), and the economy (e.g. promotion of or opposition to free trade). Meanwhile, the other nation, the unenfranchised popular majority, developed their own press, both radical-popular (e.g. the *Republican, Poor Man’s Guardian*, *Northern Star*) and, increasingly in and after the 1840s, commercial-popular (e.g. *Lloyd’s Weekly News*, *Reynold’s News*). There was a telling mismatch between scale of readership and degree of political influence. With a circulation in the low thousands, *The Times* could topple governments; with sales in the hundreds of thousands, and multiple readers per copy (Webb 1955: 33-4), the 'pauper press' was physically attacked *by* the government: their premises were raided, their property seized and their proprietors imprisoned.

Because of these asymmetric purposes and powers, the respectable and the radical press were expressions of different models of communication. *The Times* and *The Economist* developed journalism as professional expertise, to serve a readership with a stake in both economic and political questions. These papers connected the minority of emancipated citizens to each other, and for them a three-link supply chain of 'addresser/text/addressee' was appropriate, because the producer and consumer were co-subjects, equal in status if not in information. The pauper press, meanwhile, saw itself as part of the struggle against the current economic and political arrangements and, as the current phrase has it, sought to 'speak truth to power' (Kennedy 2000). Its mode was as much to accuse opponents as to address its own readers, because it spoke on behalf of – as the voice of – a class that had not attained citizenship (and therefore the idea of the 'informed citizen' did not apply). The poorest sections of that class weren't even counted in the census (Mayhew 1849: preface). For activists, who agreed that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,' a two-term ‘base/superstructure’ model was appropriate (Marx 1845). The ‘productive’ or ‘labouring’ classes and the poor were on one side, confined by penury and policing to a rather direct relationship with the economic base; the ‘titled,’ ‘landed,’ and ‘educated’ (middle) classes were on the other side, occupying the superstructural heights of politics and culture (while benefiting from basic economic power). Here already there appeared to be a chalk and cheese distinction between professional journalism (*The Times*) and popular culture (*Poor Man’s Guardian*), even though journalistic skills were to be found on both sides of the fence.

This was the basis for a divergence between journalism that saw popular culture as an object (to be feared and controlled) and journalism that saw popular culture as a subject; ‘we the people.’ The early mass-circulation newspapers were produced by radicals among whom were also entrepreneurs, who had the ‘ability to harness commercialism for the purposes of political dissent and cultural populism,’ and who were proud to use the latest high-tech industrial inventions such as the steam-powered rotary press (Haywood 2004: 164) in order to reach a mass reading public. They pioneered the ‘mass’ media. However, as time unfolded the commitment to oppositional self-representation in these newspapers declined as their scale and profits increased. As the nineteenth century progressed, wages, leisure, literacy and the franchise were progressively increased and extended. The ‘radical-popular’ (‘we’) press began to give way to the 'commercial-popular' ('they') press. A good example is the *News of the World*, launched as an unstamped 'ultra-radical' Sunday newspaper in 1843 (Maccoby 2001: p. 420). Eventually it became the newspaper with the largest circulation in the world, when it was widely known as the 'News of the Screws' because of its penchant for exposing sex scandals. It was Rupert Murdoch's first Fleet Street acquisition in 1969. It remains the Sunday stablemate of News Corp's *Sun*. The *Sun*'s own career followed the same route in the twentieth century. It began in 1911 as the *Daily Herald*, a strike-sheet published by printing unions as part of an industrial dispute. It was taken over by the Trades Union Congress and with the help of a publisher, Odhams, it became the official mouthpiece of the union movement and the Labour Party. For a while in the 1930s it was the biggest-selling newspaper in the world, but suffered in brutal circulation wars with the *Daily Express*. When the Mirror Group took over Odhams in the 1960s they revamped the *Herald*, changed its name to the *Sun*, and then sold it to Rupert Murdoch in 1969 (see NMPFT 2000). It was transformed from radical-popular agent of workers' self-representation to commercial popular mechanism for turning them into a market; from 'subject' to 'object.'

A 'certain charmed spectacle': Constitutional journalism

> *It is nice to trace how the actions of a retired widow and an unemployed youth become of such importance.* (Walter Bagehot, 1867)

By the turn of the twentieth century the popular press had largely fallen to conservative 'press barons,' who launched commercial picture-tabloids like the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*. Their proprietors addressed the labouring classes and their families not as radical activists but domestic consumers (and biddable voters). They boosted their circulation with stunts and prizes and pretty girls rather than firebrand politics (although the *Mirror* did a bit of both). During World War I they were fully incorporated into the purposes of the state, their proprietors becoming cabinet ministers. They ushered in the *Citizen Kane* era of press lords whose political clout was based on popular reach. They were exemplified by Lords Northcliffe, Rothermere, Beaverbrook, Kemsley, Camrose and Thomson on one side of the Atlantic, and on the other by William Randolph Hearst ('you furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war!': *Time* 1942).

In the process, the self-representative communication model of the radical press was recast into the sender- receiver model that still characterises journalism research. This model connects journalism to popular culture only indirectly: journalism is seen as a production system that conveys news to the public, while popular culture is a consumption system of commercially purveyed entertainment. But despite the asymmetry, each side needs the other: no readers, no news; no entertainment, no readers. However, compared with the earlier ‘radical-popular’ press upon which commercial-popular journalism is built, in this model representation has shifted from the demand to the supply side.

What kind of representation did commercial-popular journalism proceed to supply? In 1867 Walter Bagehot, journalist, influential editor of *The Economist* for 17 years, and author of the standard work on the English constitution, made a famous distinction between those component parts of the constitution that excite ‘the reverence of the population’ and those ‘by which it, in fact, works and rules’ (Bagehot 1867). He called them the ‘*dignified*’ and ‘*efficient*’ parts respectively. The monarchy and aristocracy (House of Lords) were the dignified part; the Cabinet and the House of Commons were the efficient part.

Following the extension of the vote to unskilled male labourers in the 1867 Reform Act, Bagehot feared what he called ‘the supremacy of ignorance over instruction and of numbers over knowledge.’ Indeed, he wrote, ‘I am exceedingly afraid of the ignorant multitude of the new constituencies,’ in the industrialised metropolises. To counter their numerical supremacy Bagehot made a less well remembered distinction between ‘deference’ and ‘democracy.’ He preferred *deference*, where electors defer to wealth and rank – and thence to ‘the higher qualities of which these are the rough symbols and the common accompaniments’ – over *democracy*, which exalts the ‘vacant many’ over the ‘inquiring few.’

Bagehot felt, however, that the parliamentary system itself could be used ‘to prevent or to mitigate the rule of uneducated numbers,’ so long as deference was maintained. By deference he did not mean – or mean alone – the forelock-tugging deference of what Marx called ‘rural idiocy’ towards the country squirearchy. Bagehot had something much more modern in mind:

> ‘In fact, the mass of the English people yield a deference rather to something else than to their rulers. They defer to what we may call the theatrical show of society. A certain state passes before them; a certain pomp of great men; a certain spectacle of beautiful women; a wonderful scene of wealth and enjoyment is displayed, and they are coerced by it. Their imagination is bowed down; they feel they are not equal to the life which is revealed to them. Courts and aristocracies have the great quality which rules the multitude, though philosophers can see nothing in it—visibility.’

Bagehot is describing nothing less than the genesis of what is now easily named as ‘celebrity culture’ (Plunkett 2003; see also Turner 2004; Rojek 2004). Rather than siding with those ‘philosophers’ who would ‘deride this superstition,’ he makes celebrity journalism central to the constitutional arrangements of what was at the time the most powerful empire on earth. He argued that the ‘charmed spectacle’ and human values of the royal and aristocratic families could succeed in preserving popular deference, under the cloak of which the mundane business of government could continue in few but expert hands:

> What impresses men is not mind, but the result of mind. And the greatest of these results is this wonderful spectacle of society, which is ever new, and yet ever the same; in which accidents pass and essence remains; in which one generation dies and another succeeds. … The apparent rulers of the English nation are like the most imposing personages of a splendid procession: it is by them the mob are influenced; it is they whom the spectators cheer. The real rulers are secreted in second-rate carriages; no one cares for them or asks about them, but they are obeyed implicitly and unconsciously by reason of the splendour of those who eclipsed and preceded them. (Bagehot, 1867: VIII)

This distinction between the 'dignified' (deferential) and 'efficient' (ruling) parts of the constitution is crucial to any consideration of the relationship between journalism and popular culture. It makes of the 'charmed spectacle,' and thus of the popular/media culture which is the stage for it, what may be called a ruse to rule. Journalism on both sides of this divide is part of the 'constitutional' mechanism for social order: there is journalism for 'efficiency' (*The Times*, *The Economist*), and journalism for 'deference' (celebrity spectacle). The overall system requires both parts for the ordered continuation of good government in a polity governed by fear of a democratic majority which has no direct role to play in rule. Bagehot's schema makes clear what subsequent familiarity may well have blurred; that the spectacle of 'wealth and enjoyment,' the celebrity of 'great men' and 'beautiful women,' and the 'theatrical show of society,' are all *an essential part of government*.

Riveting mankind

Popular culture is the domain of spectacle and celebrity. These are communicated to the 'mob' of 'spectators' via popular journalism. Therefore, in line with Bagehot's insight about the need for both rule and the spectacle of rule – and that these are distinct but equally necessary as the efficient and dignified parts of the constitution – journalism also has two essential 'constitutional' components: one that follows the ‘real rulers secreted in second-rate carriages,’ and another that follows the ‘charmed spectacle’ of high society.

> No feeling could seem more childish than the enthusiasm of the English at the marriage of the Prince of Wales … But no feeling could be more like common human nature as it is, and as it is likely to be … A princely marriage is the brilliant edition of a universal fact, and, as such, it rivets mankind.

The 1867 Reform Act enfranchised over a million working men. Modern journalism (as well as Bagehot’s constitution) is founded on the fear of this newly sovereign demos. How to ‘rivet’ the popular mind to a constitution in which ‘real rule’ might remain with those ‘secreted in second-rate carriages,’ so as to avoid succumbing to ‘the supremacy of ignorance over instruction and of numbers over knowledge’? The cultivation of deference via popular culture, using ‘universal facts’ and ‘common human nature’ to ‘rivet mankind’ was, however, not straightforward but a hazardous venture, not least because a ‘princely marriage’ may swiftly be followed by royal adultery and marital scandal – as has duly unfolded for not one but three princes of Wales since then (Edwards VII and VIII, Charles). Further, the people who really enjoyed that ‘great quality’ of visibility seemed to be the respectable classes themselves, not to mention the courtiers whose job it was to attract the attention of the press. As Lord McGregor (then chair of Reuters Trust) has noted:

> At the time of the wedding of the Prince of Wales [1863], sales of *The Times* increased to 108,000 copies compared with its average of around 60-65,000 during the 1860s. In 1864, the Prince and Princess visited Denmark accompanied by Lord Spencer who … went on to complain that court officials with their 'adulation of reporters show great want of dignity.' (McGregor 1995)

In short, it was not by any means a case of the posh papers providing rational information for rulers while popular culture laid on celebrity, spectacle, spin and 'bread and circuses' for the masses. It was if anything the other way around. Circulation of *The Times* nearly doubled on Royal Wedding day. For the 'have nots,' on the other hand, the spectacle was not always so welcome – it served to inflame 'the knockabout anti-monarchism of the popular press … and … the republican political rumblings in the 1860s and 1870s, some of which found a parliamentary voice opposing grants to the Queen's children on occasions such as royal marriages' (Thompson, 2001, p. 75).

Similarly, it should not be assumed that the respectable press was always pro-*government* (it was always pro-*rule*). Thomas Barnes in *The Times* joined with Richard Carlile in the *Republican* in denouncing the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. *The Times* thundered: 'nearly a hundred of the King's unarmed subjects have been sabred by a body of cavalry in the streets of a town of which most of them were inhabitants, and in the presence of those Magistrates whose sworn duty it is to protect and preserve the life of the meanest Englishmen' (19 August 1819). *The Times* was in favour of the 1932 Reform Bill to extend the franchise, while the *Morning Chronicle* commissioned both Charles Dickens's 'sketches by Boz' and Henry Mayhew's reports on the condition of the labouring poor in England and Wales (Mayhew 1849). In other words, the top people's press was averse neither to spectacle and sensation nor to social reform. What really differentiated the two types of journalism discussed here was their *readership*: understood at the time as 'two nations' and still now not fully integrated into one 'public,' politically, journalistically or culturally.

Walter Bagehot was candid about the rationale for a constitution with a 'dignified' part that was literally useless but vital in terms of 'visibility,' spectacle and narrative. It was straightforward fear of 'numbers over knowledge.' He was 'exceedingly afraid' that popular sovereignty would overwhelm established arrangements. To counter the influence of the 'ignorant multitude,' however, Bagehot proposed not to educate the masses as to their ‘real rulers,’ (much less to rule themselves) but to put on a good show – ‘not mind, but the result of mind.’ In this endeavour he was aided and abetted by the ‘efficient’ papers, the conservative press barons, and the sender-text-receiver model of communication, all of which were dedicated to ‘riveting mankind’, that is, trying to hold on to ‘real rule,’ albeit from a ‘second-rate carriage,’ and seeking to unite the ‘two nations’ under one constitution. It is this model of communication that underlies commercial-popular journalism to this day, and this is also the model most widely taught to journalists.

Plus ça change?

> *The logic of the history I have been outlining … is for the industry to keep flogging the dead horse of its weary old formats until they lose their audience entirely. At that point, the networks can claim to have proved there is no market for current affairs programs any more, and replace them with a game show.* (Turner 2005: 159)

Since its invention in the French and the Industrial Revolutions, the popular reading public has migrated from press to broadcasting and thence to online media, and the scale of the potential readership has expanded from a class or a nation to a globalised social network market (which can sometimes also be a public). But the pioneering effort of the radical press to solve the problem of ‘getting ideas across’ demographic boundaries in conditions of economic change, political contestation and cultural division, was the crucial R&D for what later became a thoroughly commercialised media environment. The current period is experiencing a return to self-representation or demand-led rather than supply-led journalism, via user-generated content, citizen journalism and self-made or DIY media of various kinds, all of which can be used for journalism as well as for self-expression and entertainment, including plenty of bawdy stuff that retreads the fuzzy line between liberty and licentiousness.

Perhaps the model of communication established in the early ‘pauper press’ is due for a revival. Certainly there are straws in the wind: one that blows by as I write is a newspaper story in *The Australian*, syndicated from *The Times* – both ‘newspapers of record.’ It reports on the popularity of a YouTube video of ‘a model [Amber Lee Ettinger] prancing around New York in various stages of undress while lip-synching the words of a song declaring she had a crush on presidential candidate Barack Obama’ (*Australian* 2007). Among the lyrics quoted are these:

> Baby I cannot wait
> Till 2008,
> Baby you’re the best candidate. …
> You’re into border security,
> Let’s break this border between you and me.
> Universal healthcare reform,
> Mmmm – it makes me warm. (Obama Girl 2007)

Quite apart from the combination of humour, sexuality, and politics, what links this to ‘self-representative’ journalism is its non-canonical provenance and its popular reach. It was published on the ‘broadcast yourself’ platform, where it attracted over a million hits, thousands of comments, and the attention of ‘over 200 TV stations around the world’ (Obama Girl 2007). Although it appears to have been professionally made, it personifies the perspective of the citizen (performed by ‘Obama Girl’), while using the resources of popular culture, including comedy, music, dance, and a pretty girl to say something that is ‘serious’ at least to the extent that it addresses a notoriously non-voting demographic in the name of anti-Bush politics.

Fusing sex and politics in the name of liberty has remained a well-trodden route to fame and profit from the *livres philosophiques* onwards. It has been continued in the present era via such figures as Felix Dennis (from *Oz* to *Maxim*) and Larry Flynt (*Hustler*). An endless succession of scandals, from royal mistresses to Monica Lewinski, continually remind us that sex remains one of the most potent elements of political journalism. The staples of popular culture – scandal, celebrity, bedroom antics – are the very propellant of modern journalism and therefore of modern ideas (Hartley 1996: 114-20).

Is this what has become of the tradition of popular self-representation? Certainly popular culture is the ground on which new experiments in journalism are propagating. Developments in online media are a definite challenge to expert, top-down, producer-led, supply side journalism, as is well recognised in both industry and academic circles. The industrial-era model of one-way, one-to-many, read-only, mass communication that sees the populace as an object (of policy and campaigns) is now supplemented if not supplanted by two-way, peer-to-peer, read & write, networked communication where popular culture is once again the subject and agent of its own representation. The reading public is at last evolving into a 'writing' public. Now, in principle if not in practice, everyone can be a journalist; anyone can publish journalism (Hartley 2008). The tradition of self-representation has found a mechanism to cut out the intermediary agency of the professional expert and the political activist alike. People can and do speak for themselves in an expectation of being heard, whether by a small group of peers or more widely. In short, the supply-chain model of journalism is again in conflict with the self-representation model, as was the case at the beginning of modern journalism in the period 1790-1830.

Both journalism and popular culture currently face the challenge of 'citizen consumers' who produce as well as consume media across all communicative domains including information, entertainment and deliberative debate. The popular extent of this challenge is contestable, but it does bring into focus serious questions about the future of the modern professional, expert, representative journalist, especially when so many of this group are employed on 'non-news' journalism, while 'traditional' political journalism is driven by ideological agendas (Fox) and formula-driven reporting (*Daily Mail*).

That challenge extends to the study of journalism too. The curriculum of J-schools and the range of topics in academic journals have tended to restrict what counts as journalism to the democratic process (politics – including war and other forms of social conflict), the career of policy (public administration and its maladministration) and the business cycle (economics and its downside). Much of what journalists actually do is missing from the record. You wouldn't guess that they do astrology, captions, celebrity, competitions, crime, desire, domestic life, emotional experience, fashion, fear, fiction, human interest, lifestyle, media, medical procedures, pin-ups, real estate, reviews, scandal, sex, shopping, sport, travel, and a lot else besides; or that they are active agents in PR, marketing, spin, propaganda, impression management and the 'economy of attention' (Lanham 2006). Such aspects of journalistic practice, which are deeply embedded in popular culture even if they don't originate there, go back to the eighteenth century, but have had remarkably little impact on the study of journalism.

The familiar and widespread allergic response towards cultural studies (or any other 'theory') by professional journalism educators has had a negative effect on the academic advancement of the field (Zelizer 2004), but at the same time journalism courses in universities are increasingly popular as skills-based information management and writing programs. Future research in the field might want to investigate the extension of journalistic capabilities into popular culture via such training schemes, along with impact of anti-expert DIY formats from blogs to YouTube: are journalism and popular culture finally dissolving into each other? Is it possible to imagine both 'numbers' and 'knowledge,' subject and object, radical and commercial, in the rule of modernity?

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